Passed M. 9th. 1828

A Dissertation on Hepatitis

By A. G. D. Roy
of Virginia

Candidate for the Degree of M. D.
In the University of Pennsylvania.

January 30th 1828.

Of

write

disco

By

of

by ap

memo

behav

in its

med

of t

the

unit

mism

slow

suff

of it

inter

by

appo

Of Hepatitis or Inflammation of the liver.

Hepatitis is divided by systematic writers into acute and chronic, the latter variety of the disease I have chosen for the subject of my dissertation.

By chronic Hepatitis I understand a slow inflammatory affection of the substance of the liver or its enclosing membranes or both. It is frequently the result of acute hepatitis improperly treated or suffered to advance too far in its inflammatory progress before the salutary aid of medicine and other means for overcoming the violence of the disease are duly exercised; unfortunate indeed the proper time for medical assistance is often neglected until the constitution is entirely destroyed by the undermining influence of the malady.

The present form of this complaint is slow in its progressive stages, the organ attacked may be suffering for months and even years under the ravages of its deleterious effects and yet present no very obvious external marks of disease, or aggravation of symptoms. by which our attention is directed to the insidious approach of danger; any transient feelings of indisposi-

tion
per
the
fre
fal
neg
fre
tive
org
w o
pre
so r
com
ence
sym
exer
ma
pra

tion are generally imputed by the patient to some improper or ungrounded cause, not for a moment suspecting the liver as being the source from whence all these peculiar sensations are derived. Thus deluded by his fallacious imagination the necessary precautions are neglected and the disease so firmly entrenched as to frequently baffle the skill of our profession.

So generic indeed are liver complaints and so deceptive in their appearance, that I am persuaded this organ is frequently involved unnoticed by either practitioner or patient, and in consequence of the variety of symptoms presented and its disposition to assume the form of so many different diseases, it is often ~~mistaken~~ for some one to which it has no relation.

The most effectual method of guarding against such mistakes, is an attention strictly directed to the symptoms generally presented, particularly the alvine excretions, which if properly attended to will in a majority of cases give a correct decision.

The Symptoms are generally slightly felt by the patient, and often after a continuance for sometime

are more prominently disclosed by a disagreable sense of fulness after eating, accompanied by an oppression or soreness in the epigastric region, followed by a disposition to drowsiness. The skin becomes dry, with much accumulation of heat; the complexion is sallow; stools light denoting a deficiency of bile accompanied with much flatulence. Urine high coloured deficient in quantity, often depositing a pink or mucous sediment: at other times it is more copious and liquid in its consistence. The patient feels a considerable langour and vacuity at the pit of the stomach; succeeded by a disposition to sleep, which is seldom of a refreshing nature, interrupted by distressing dreams leaving an alarm when he awakes which no visible circumstance seems to justify. Pain is occasionally felt which is acute or obtuse and heavy, it is most usually in the right side & consequently the patient lies most comfortably on it. The pulse varies much in its frequency sometimes hard and chordede at others small and frequent with frequent intermissions, which is ascribed to a redundancy of bile in the hepatic duct, an obstruction of blood in the hepatic artery

or by an accumulation of it in the vena portæ produced by an enlargement of the substance of the organ.

Dejection of spirits is a general concomitant of the patient at this stage of the disease, so much so that the most frivolous circumstances are swelled to the most momentous dangers, and trifles light as the air he breathes are transfigured into mosters of the most hideous character. The bowels never perform their office by throwing off a quantity proportionate to the quantity of aliment taken in. The appetite is variable sometimes diminished at others increased in a preternatural degree. The thirst is generally natural, tongue furred most commonly at the base with a white or yellowish coat. In many cases there is a pain in the right side extending to the right shoulder and down the vertebral column where a gnawing or aching sensation is experienced, with a fulness in the side and vacuity at the pit of the stomach which produces great uneasiness and restlessness. The extremities are edematous with a want of motion in the joints showing a vitiated state of the lubricating fluids which renders them unfit

for the
of the
has p
offe
II.
eati
ties.
opea
of the
turn
ratio
3
of the
as to
or pre
show
pute
and
prev
4
those
affec

for their healthy offices and the preservation of of the facility of motion required. After the patient has for a length of time been suffering under the afflicting power of this disease, a general emaciation is one of its most prominent characteristics. Finally the disease is not unfrequently developed by hepatic symptoms, such as an enlargement of the liver and derangement of its functions: terminating in a hollow dry cough without expectoration in asthma; Hydrocephalus; Hydrothorax. &c.

These symptoms notwithstanding the inveteracy of of their nature are often so insidious in their attack as to pass almost entirely unnoticed by either practitioner or patient, while examinations after death have plainly shown the liver to be highly diseased, which in the patients lifetime produced but little inconvenience, and which must have doubtless been the result of previous inflammation.

From the striking resemblance of these symptoms to those involving the lungs, and to other inflammatory affections of the chest, they are eminently calculated

to mislead the inexperienced practitioner, but they may be distinguished from the history and progress of the complaint.

It is well observed by the late Dr Paisley that no doubt can arise with an experienced practitioner; if we have no pain to direct us an experienced touch will discover the tenderness obstruction and enlargement of the liver. He adds an experienced touch, because it requires a repetition of examination to satisfy oneself relative to the difference between a healthy & diseased state of the Organ.

To facilitate an examination it should be observed that when the diaphragm descends the liver is carried downwards, and when it is carried in a contrary direction it is covered by the margin of the ribs or chest. hence you should place the patient on his back with his head drawn forwards, and knees at right angles with his body, in order to relax his abdominal muscles, then direct him to make a deep inspiration, at this time the examination should be made following the margin of the ribs with the fingers.

The liver is sometimes found enlarged sometimes diminished

at other enlarged without any alteration of structure, which happens in recent congestion.

Causes. The causes of chronic Hepatitis are long exposure to heat or cold; marsh miasmata; the Intermittent or remittent fevers; Drunkenness; It is says Professor Chapman frequently brought on by extravagant use of mercury, in autumnal fevers and other disorders producing a great excitement of the liver; and it is a law of the animal economy that a correspondent collapse will follow a preternatural excitement hence in obedience to that law, when the liver is immediately excited by mercury that a correspondent collapse must necessarily follow, which produces a feeble circulation through the vena portarum, giving rise to congestion enlargement and induration of the organ.

The degrees to which the liver may arrive in point of disease are varied from congestion to induration & even destruction; besides being filled with cheesy, osseous, or tallowy matter. An eminent writer relates the case of a gentleman in Bengal whose liver presented the appearance of a corroded preparation leaving

the

only the bloodvessels. Johnson speaks of many remarkable cases which came under his observation one was somuch enlarged as to reach the pubes.

Indeed so intimately connected are all the abdominal viscera, that their motions entirely depend on eachother. and also unite the performance of the functions peculiar to each, in such intimate connexion, that the disturbance of one necessarily produces a correspondent alteration in the others.

This is strikingly exemplified in the liver which recives its blood from the Stomach; Intestines; Pancreas, & Spleen. Hence any abdominal organ being diseased materially effects the condition of the liver, and their derangement may be a cause of Hepatic disease. Thus situated it is of importance to know whether any existing disease of the liver is a primary or secondary affection, arising from some distant abdominal organ. This is accomplished by a strict attention to the variety of complicated bilious complaints, which calls for careful discrimination on the part of the practitioner.

A sudden repulsion of blood from the surface to the internal organs, necessarily increases congestion by over distending the vessels in their debilitated and morbid condition; at a period too, when they do not possess energy sufficient for the restoration of their healthy action.

Chronic Hepatitis is slow in its progress and deceptive in its appearances creeping on with undermining rapidity without the patient being aware of its existence, or occasionally without any characteristic to induce even the Physician, to think the ailments of the individual arise from this source. Hence every one on reflection will consider such a disease of primary importance and perceive the necessity of assiduously inquiring into its nature, in order that it may be known when it exists, and the means to eradicate it be conducted with discrimination and propriety. Nature in all cases if not frustrated by rashness and inexperience, will do much to counteract diseased impressions, and should be assisted with gentleness in her exertions.

In hepatic complaints generally, the first thing to be attended to, is the stage of the disease, a knowledge of which is acquired by an attentive examination of the secretions that pass by the Stomach and intestines, to which every medical man should familiarize himself; as it requires time and observation to make him become acquainted with the varieties presented in biliary secretions. When there is an unusual accumulation of bile in the gall bladder, it produces congestion, and necessarily pressure on the large blood vessels of the abdomen, obstructing the equilibrium of the circulation. The head sympathises, and always feels tight, with a sense of stupidity, not unlike that produced by the effects of opium. This is accompanied by a dry heat of the skin, felt more particularly in the palms of the hands, and soles of the feet.
In conducting the treatment of this morbid condition of the organ, our remedies should be accommodatted to the progress of the complaint. Hepatitis in this country is divided into 2 stages. First that of a simple derangement of the functions of the gland. Second

An actual change in the organization of the organ.
Treatment. The first object is to produce free action in the stomach and intestines, by which the liver from its intimate connexion will be materially influenced, paying due regard to the restoration of balance which equally influences the surface and general circulation, for the accomplishment of which, it is requisite to abstract blood from the arm by small and repeated bleedings, or cupping, leeching, in the vicinity of the diseased part. Due regard should be had to properly emulging the biliary vessels and procuring regular alvine evacuations, which is more readily effected by Calomel than other medicines.
The leontodon Taraxacum or Dandelion is spoken of as having been used with success in this complaint given in the dose of a table spoonful of the expressed juice when green. But Professor Chapman, as a remedy more worthy of confidence a course of Mercury which should never be extended to a profuse salivation as has been injudiciously recommended by some writers on the subject. To obtain the best possible effects

recommend

of mercury, calomel or what is still better the blue pill should be given in small quantities until the mouth is made tender and it should not be pushed further. ~~and~~ This impression should be continued for several weeks as circumstances may demand. With the view of producing a transfer of excitement from the diseased part as also a discharge from the surface in its neighbourhood. blisters, setons, and issues, have acquired a reputation: the former particularly when frequently applied are of great use; and this mode is preferable to keeping up the discharge by stimulating dressings, inasmuch as it produces a more positive determination to the surface. Nitro Muriatic Acid is spoken of as a remedy of some efficacy in this complaint and has been recommended as a substitute for calomel, but invariably proves prejudicial until the inflammatory action has been overcome.

Notwithstanding the eminence skill and vigilant attention on the part of the physician, in combination with the strictest adherence to advice on the part of the patient, we sometimes find all

our remedies ineffectual in arresting the progress of this formidable malady. After having recourse to all the remedies in our power, it is advised by an eminent member of our faculty for the patient to visit some of our sulphur watering places which act not only by the effects of the water on the system, but also by dispeling those gloomy reflections and apprehensions, with which the patient is so universally beset in this disease.

The springs best suited for such diseases are those of Virginia & Pennsylvania. This should be tried so long as there is no inflammatory action existing in the system. In such cases they uniformly prove injurious, to this should be added a strict attention to diet, that best adapted to patients afflicted with this disease is such as is attenuant, nutritive, and easy of digestion, avoiding salted meats and greasy substances. This diet may be gradually improved by the addition of light animal broths, poultry, mutton or veal, so dressed as to retain their nutritious juices. ripe fruits

in no
cor
the
if
wit
and fo
Ofsite
of the
tes to
tan
after re
him we

in moderate quantity. Vegetables of a crude cold nature which are liable to acidify on the stomach should be carefully avoided if wine is indulged in it should be diluted with water. Malt liquors seldom agree with the patient and for the most part should be laid aside, Spirituous liquors should be avoided as productive of the most deleterious consequences. A strict attention to the above precautions is of primary importance and if duly attended to by the patient will often reward him for his abstinence and crown him with a return of health.